

Message

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**Subject:** West Virginia Metro News (10-23) Ames Plant Fire: Wood County schools closed Monday

<http://wvmetronews.com/2017/10/22/it-just-keeps-going-wood-county-commissioner-says-of-ames-plant-fire/>

## Ames Plant Fire: Wood County schools closed Monday

By [Shauna Johnson](#) in [News](#) | October 22, 2017 at 8:52PM

**PARKERSBURG, W.Va.** — Wood County school officials announced Sunday night there would be no school Monday in the county because of the ongoing air quality issues caused by the Ames Plant fire that began early Saturday.

Wood County Unified Command also issued a voluntary shelter order Sunday evening because of the potential shifting winds could have on the ongoing smoke from the blaze.

The American Red Cross established a shelter for residents Sunday evening at South Parkersburg Baptist Church at 1655 Blizzard Drive.

The Wood County Commission met Sunday evening to discuss additional response and cleanup efforts.

Early Sunday afternoon, Wood County Commissioner Blair Couch talked with MetroNews from outside the Mobile Command Unit set up as the coordination point for ongoing firefighting efforts involving dozens of departments as heavy, black smoke from the fire continued to billow over the Parkersburg Area.

The Sunday plume of smoke was smaller than Saturday's, he said.

"There has been progress made," Couch reported. "But I have a difficult time giving a time period (for putting out the fire) based on what resources we can bring to bear."

On Sunday, the Ohio River was being used as the water source to fight the flames to reduce the strain on the Parkersburg water system. The West Virginia National Guard was supplying foam for firefighting while the Division of Highways was trucking in additional water.

Couch, though, said much more would be needed — either supplied in coordination with the Governor's Office or the federal government — as part of a larger, more comprehensive strategy to extinguish the fire.

"We need additional resources," he said.

"The question is do we hire additional resources? Do we go out to outside vendors and say, 'We need to buy even more foam?' Or do we need to buy additional pumping equipment so we can access the river water and get it to the firemen faster?"

On Sunday, Couch could not begin to estimate the potential costs of the fire.

Through the day Saturday and into Sunday, witnesses described a massive fire that burned through nearly all of the former Ames buildings which covered 420,000 square feet.

"It's so big that people come to see and they get bored. They just stand here and watch it burn, they spend an hour, but it just keeps going," Couch told MetroNews.

There were no immediate reports of injuries.

On Saturday, the Wood County Commission declared the fire site and its surrounding streets a disaster area to allow for quicker deployment of resources.

More than 30 volunteer fire departments continued to work at the fire scene Sunday along with hundreds of other local, regional and state officials including those from Ohio and investigators with West Virginia Fire Marshal's Office.

No potential cause for the blaze was being confirmed as of Sunday.

"It's just an alphabet soup of responding agencies and the costs are going to be extraordinary to put this thing out," said Couch. "We want to spend the money to make it done quickly, but we're just *a* county."

Initial laboratory tests of fallen ash from the Ames fire showed that ash was not toxic to residents, according to Wood County officials.

Those officials also reported early air monitoring testing indicated areas around the fire scene were “within acceptable quality limits.”

As a precaution, the Wood County Commission was advising residents to avoid smoke exposure “as much as possible.”

“The wind has been with us. Praise the Lord,” Couch said Sunday.

*Jeff Jenkins contributed to this story.*